

**A STUDY ON THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF A  
GERIATRIC POPULATION IN A RURAL AREA OF  
KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU**

**Background & Objectives:**

The proportion of elderly in the world population is increasing, especially in India which will soon become home to the world's second-largest population of over -60s. It is essential to have an understanding of the pattern of health problems and related factors to provide appropriate healthcare services and ensure their utilization. Hence, we aim to identify the perceived health problems of the elderly in a rural area of Kanyakumari district and study their association with key socio economic factors.

**Methods:**

250 elderly subjects above 60 years of age were included in the study from Thiruvattar block, Kanyakumari by cluster sampling. Perceived health problems and associated socioeconomic factors were obtained through a pre tested questionnaire.

**Results:**

94.8% of elderly reported at least one morbidity while 78.4% of elderly had multiple morbidity. Hypertension (59.9%), Diabetes (42.2%), musculoskeletal disorders (31.2%) and gastrointestinal disorders (29.5%) were the main morbidities. Good Self Rated Health was reported by 60%

elderly. 53.2% elderly admitted to avoiding medication and 57.6% elderly admitted to avoid seeking healthcare. Restriction of daily activities and poor social participation were significant predictors of multimorbidity and self rated health.

### **Conclusion:**

The proportion of elderly suffering from multiple morbidities, especially Non communicable Diseases is very high. The present study clearly highlights that education only up to primary level, poor social participation, lower SES, single elderly and those with reduced functionality in day to day activities tend to be more vulnerable to health and social problems. Health education, for the early diagnosis and treatment of geriatric disorders, should be given to the elderly and their care givers to avoid misperceptions about geriatric disorders and their signs and symptoms in the elderly.

**Key Words:** perceived health, social problems, rural elderly